

4.3.2. Identifying Presentation Patterns

A correlation analysis was conducted in order to gain more information about typical patterns of media presentations of political decision-making processes. The results for the correlation analysis are presented in Table 4.7. Based on the correlation analysis, two distinct patterns of presenting political processes could be identified. The first pattern can be described as presenting political processes as consensus-oriented endeavors. This pattern encompasses the following variables: collective attribution, collective actions, compromises, and the role of understanding-seeking endeavors. These variables are positively correlated. The pattern, hence, is characterized by a focus on consensus-seeking endeavors and the role of collective actions and interests. The second pattern can be described as presenting political processes as shaped by power struggles. This pattern encompasses the following variables: power struggles, accusation, and winning and losing. The pattern, hence, is characterized by a focus on power struggles and the competitiveness of political processes (references to winners and losers of political decision-making processes). These variables are positively correlated. The two patterns are negatively linked: The items representing the power struggle focus are negatively associated with collective actions, collective attribution and compromise-seeking behavior and vice versa.

| | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7 | 8 | 9 |
|--------------------------|---------|--------|---------|---------|--------|---------|-----|-------|---|
| 1 Compromise | 1 | | | | | | | | |
| 2 Understanding | .56 ** | 1 | | | | | | | |
| 3 Power struggle | -.17 ** | -.12 | 1 | | | | | | |
| 4 Accusation | .04 | -.05 | .47 ** | 1 | | | | | |
| 5 Collective attribution | .39 ** | .33 ** | -.31 ** | -.17 ** | 1 | | | | |
| 6 Collective actions | .36 ** | .45 ** | -.17 ** | -.11 | .28 ** | 1 | | | |
| 7 Inability | -.06 | -.13 * | .24 ** | .17 ** | -.13 * | -.19 ** | 1 | | |
| 8 Failure | .03 | -.08 | .10 | .07 | -.05 | -.11 | .08 | 1 | |
| 9 Winning and losing | -.08 | -.10 | .23 ** | .17 ** | -.11 | -.04 | .10 | .13 * | 1 |

Note. Entries are Pearson correlation coefficients (r). For more information on the variables see the overview in chapter 4.2.2

* $p < 0.05$, ** $p < 0.01$ (two-sided test of significance)

Table 4.7. Correlation between Variables Measuring the Media's Presentation of Processes

Items of both patterns consensus-orientation and power struggles are linked to references regarding the inefficiency of political processes. The power struggle pattern goes along with references to the inability of finding a solution to political problems (failure). In contrast, aspects of the consensus pattern are negatively related with the aspect of inability. This indicates that when political processes are presented by focusing on the role of consensus, articles are less likely to refer to the inability to solve political problems. In contrast, when political processes are pre-

sented by focusing on power struggles, articles are more likely to refer to the inability to solve political problems. The presentations patterns identified in the correlation analysis can contribute to the development of realistic stimulus material. According implications for the conceptualization of the stimulus material (see Section 6.2.3) are discussed in the following summarizing section.

4.4. Summary and Discussion

The results from the content analysis indicate that media information on political decision-making processes encompasses aspects of collective action and attribution, compromise-seeking endeavors and the role of mutual understanding as well as references to power struggles, accusations, and the inability to solve political problems. Altogether, the characteristics of press coverage of political decision-making processes in the Swiss press appeared to be rather stable when compared across newspaper types and media information about political processes in different political institutions. However, the focus on political discord has increased during the last decades, whereas consensus-orientation and the attribution of decisions to collective actions have become less frequent in the media coverage. This finding is in line with previous research which shows that parliamentary coverage in the U.S. increasingly focuses on political discord (Lichter & Amundson, 1994) and conflicts (Morris & Clawson, 2005). From a methodological point of view, however, it should be borne in mind that this study's content analysis is based on a restricted sample. Three Swiss newspapers and television news from one broadcast channel were investigated, all of which were from the German-speaking part in Switzerland. Thus, the results might not apply to the news coverage in Switzerland in general. In addition, the finding that news coverage contains references to political discord and inability cannot be taken as evidence of a lack of media attention to the efficiency of political processes, for instance, because the content analysis included only a selection of variables measuring aspects of political processes which were considered to be relevant in the framework of the present study. Whereas references to the inefficiency of decision-making procedures were measured, references to the efficiency of such processes were not.

One purpose of this overview was to inform the conceptualization of stimulus material for the experimental study (Chapter 6). The results presented here hold several implications in this respect. First, findings suggest that the external validity of the stimulus material is greater, if the articles refer to political processes in the legislative branch, because articles about the parliament were found to contain more evaluative aspects than articles about the government. Second, based on the results it appears reasonable to use articles from regional papers as the base material for the development of the stimulus material, because the regional paper contained more evaluative aspects than the tabloid. In addition, the regional paper's position in terms of how political decision-making processes are presented lies somewhere between the tabloid and the broadsheet. Third, stimulus articles should relate to aspects that